EAST AND WEST SERIES

No. 89 DOUBLE NUMBER Sept.-Oct., 1964

9/241

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T. L. VASWANI

EAST AND WEST SERIES
[Monthly]
An Interpreter of the Life of the Spirit

9/241

TEMPLE - BELLS

CONTENTS

Foreword 3
A Brother of the Sun and Stars 6
An Egyptian Master 17
The Vision of Unity 24
The Beloved of My Native Land 25
Follow the Flute ! 34
A Child of the Spirit 40
Three Questions 46

The "East and West Series" seeks to spread the message of the saints and sages, the prophets and *rishis* of Humanity. They have appeared in all ages. They have sanctified both East and West.

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In India :—Rs. 3/–; outside India :—8 s. or $ 1·50 or equivalent.
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For a specimen copy send stamps worth 50 nP.
Write to :—
The Manager, "East and West Series,"
10 Connaught Road, Poona–1, (India).

IMPORTANT

Kindly note that this is a double number for the two months, September and October, 1964.

Our next issue, also, will be a double number (for November and December) and will be out in December.

—The Manager

BLESSINGS AND MESSAGES

I esteem your publication very much. It is really a link between the East and the West. You place before your readers different types of human thought and help them in enriching their minds.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer
Lamberene, East Africa

These little books carry a vibrant message to the youth of India for the implanting of a new ideology in an ancient civilization.

Ruth C. McMyler
in The Theosophist, Adyar, Madras

The great mystic, humanitarian, and educationist, Sri T. L. Vaswani, has written wonderful words,—words which I have repeated, over and over again, and which all mankind will do well to meditate upon :—"The world is on flames. And what power can quench them, if not the power of love?"

In this world full of hatred, you have kindled a light which illuminates the minds and hearts of mankind.

Prof. Aurelio E. Peterlin
Trieste, Italy

Dadaji's commentary on the Gita is so captivating that one likes to keep it nearest to one's heart. He has made the philosophy of the Gita so easy of understanding. It is my prayer that he may complete the series up to the eighteenth chapter.

K. P. Bhavnani
Bombay

Printed by P. H. Ramchandani at Lokasangraha Press, 1786, Sadashiv Peth, Poona-2, and published by him from Gita Publishing House, 10, Connaught Road, Poona-1.
Editor and Owner : J. P. Vaswani
This issue : 75 nP. or 1s. 6d. or 30 cents

9/241

FOREWORD

In this new number of the "Series," I write, among others, of four great seers :—(1) St. Francis of Assisi; (2) Mustapha Junnuna of Egypt; (3) Shah Abdul Latif,—Poet of Sind; and (4) Blessed Hatim Hashim of Arabia. These four seers belong to the class of exceptional men. They belong to all : they are the monopoly of no one nation, religion or race.

The saints and sages lived and moved in the joy of fellowship with the Eternal and so there was the wonderful unity of thought and life between them. Theirs was a simple life. They all worshipped Truth : they all lived in truth and love. I speak of them often as *murshids*, as *mahatmas*, as children of the one Holy Spirit. Such men are the true spiritual leaders of the human race. They are the "temple-bells" who sound notes of reverence and love. "Thou, O man! art nothing without God!" this is the cry of them all. As a bird without wings, thou art nothing without love for thy Lord. Guru Nanak sings beautifully in one of his verses :—

As a well without water,
A cow without milk,
A shrine in darkness,
So art thou, my soul, without Him!

In these days which are burdened with sectarianism, it is a relief to know that we may find the true goal of life by the "simple way." It is the call of the Infinite. That great teacher of the eighteenth century, Abdul Wahid, known alike for his purity and his love, said :—"The ways are various : the way to Truth is but one. And they who travel on the way must learn to go on the way alone. They are not known. Quietly they go on the way, stage by stage."

How quietly on his way went Shah Latif! And he is become an awakener of millions, today. His words are translated into Urdu and other languages. And the new awakened Sindhis of today make bold to affirm that he is not only the greatest poet of Sind. This Shakespeare of Sind, they say, is one of the greatest poets of the world. Camel-drivers and cart-drivers and boys, moving through dark forests at night, tune a few words of Shah Latif and feel no longer lonely :—

May my words be luminous with thy Light!
May I speak the Truth!
May it protect me!
And may it protect my murshid, my teacher!

And how simple is his message! Yet how vital is this message for the modern world! Keep me, he says, from creed and keep me from greed!

In poets and mystics of South India, the same note is sounded by singers in their language. One of them sings thus :—

Believe the One who is above thee and within thee!
Believe that God is! Know that all other wealth is naught!
Feed the hungry and be happy that God's Will is done!

Ramakrishna Paramahansa sounds the same note as do the *fakirs* of Sind and Egypt. The true wealth of life, he urges, is silence. Ramakrishna of Bengal, like Saint Tukaram the Maharashtrian singer and seer, refers to the treasure-chest of silence. It was an Arabian boy who, driving his camel in the dark of the night, sang :—

Thou art the Light!
Thou art the Sun!
Thou art the Moon!
Thou art the Supreme!

Thou art the Ever-fair,—
The All-radiant!
Thou art the Creator of all!
Teach me, my murshid!
What is His Name?
And this let me learn,—
He is Silence!

A saint of the South has said :—

Let me not wander in vain!
Let me not labour in vain!
Let me not fly into anger!
Let me not leave the company of the virtuous!

The essence of the teaching and songs of the saints and seers and bards and mystics of East and West may, I believe, be expressed in a few simple words thus :—

Forget me not when I forget Thee!

Forget me not, but keep me out of the fever of the life around me.

Forget me not, Master! but bless me that I die not in the loneliness of the world's loud noises!

Forget me not, in my wanderings far and wide! But lead me safe through danger's ways that I may find my home at thy Lotus Feet!

Forget me not, Thou Silent One! But keep me steady on the path, unafraid in Thy service!

I have wandered, but in Thy quest!

I have sinned, but in the yearning for Thy Face!

I have fallen, but in climbing up to Thee. Forget me not!

And in the words of the king who was a sage,—Yuddhishtra :—"May I behold the beauty of true happiness, speak the truth and be kind and compassionate to all!"

T. L. Vaswani

A BROTHER OF THE SUN AND STARS

In the year 1226, on October 4, Francis passed on, blessing all his brethren, saying to them :—"Farewell, my children! Abide in the fear of the Lord and ever persevere therein!"

He was in the forty-fifth year of his life. He had asked to be buried on a hill on which it was customary to execute criminals : but this desire of the saint could not be fulfilled. His holy body was laid to rest in the Church of St. George. A few years later, his remains were translated to their new resting-place.

A moving, little legend tells us that he was born in a stable, transformed now into a chapel,—the Chapel of the "Little Saint Francis." And over its door may still be read the words :—

This chapel has been the stable of ox and of ass :
In which was born Francis, the wonder of the world.

In a village, named Assisi, stands this chapel. Assisi is, today, a place of pilgrimage. When Francis learns that his end is near, he wishes to be taken to Assisi : and, as the litter in which they carry the saint approaches Assisi, citizens flock with cries of joy to meet the man they once had stoned ! There, when the doctor tells him that his sickness is incurable and that he soon must die, he raises his hands in reverence to the Lord, his eyes beaming bright, and he exclaims :—"Welcome ! my Sister Death!" And he spends the night singing.

On the last day he blesses Assisi. To his dear disciple, Clare, he sends a tender message :—"Put aside all sorrow and sadness." And he breathes his last, singing the following words from the Psalm :—"Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Thy Name!"

Francis loved all birds but, above all, the lark. To him the lark was a symbol of humility, for she would gladly go by the way to find a few grains of corn, even among the dung, and eat them. He addressed the lark as his sister. On the last day of his life, two larks came from their grove,—a chronicler says,—to bid farewell to Francis. And Francis smiled, then gently murmured :—"My larks sing for me : praised be my Lord!"

Like Buddha and Mahavira, like Kabir and Nanak, like all the saints and seers of India, Francis felt himself to be a brother of all creatures,—of birds and animals and plants, of elements and stars and streams. Dear to him were sparrows and doves, flowers and trees,—as members of his own Order!

Meditating on him,—his wonderful life and his illuminating "Sayings,"—I have asked myself, again and again :—"Who is he?"

He reminds me of some of the *rishis* (seers) of India, some of the *fakirs* (renouncers) and *dervishes* (contemplatives) of the East.

Francis renounces everything. He possesses nothing : he is Christ-possessed. In poverty is his joy, for his Master, Jesus, he knows, was poor. Francis shows the beauty and fascination of the simple life. He is, he says, betrothed to Lady Poverty : he rejoices in the betrothal. His very soul sings in the words :—"Poverty is the virtue which makes the soul, while still restrained on earth, converse with the angels in heaven."

Brought up as a prince, he flings away riches. As a true disciple of Christ he reflects, by day and night, the radiance of holy poverty. At night he sleeps on the ground and has under him nothing but a little straw.

He has discarded all pillows. A testimony to this is given us in the words of a dignitary of his Church, who afterwards became Pope Gregory. Looking at the Franciscan brethren, as they slept at night, Gregory wept, saying :—"Look you here, where the brethren sleep, while we, unworthy ones, do make use of so many superfluities."

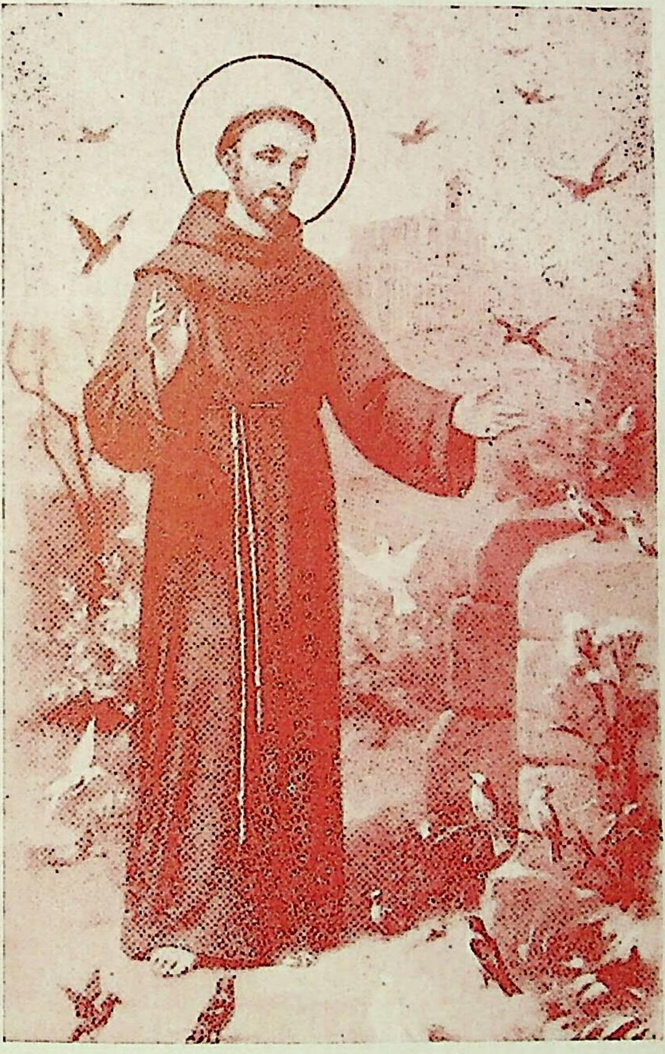
Francis moves from place to place : he has no money in his pocket. Money is a burden! He goes out to preach with light steps, with joy in his heart. He sweeps out the churches with a broom, his anxiety being to keep the churches clean. He washes dishes in other people's kitchens : he begs bread from door to door. But he is cheerful, happy : there is a song on his lips.

He believes in the sanctity of manual labour and he sets an example to others by toiling with his hands. "Idleness," he says again and again, "is the enemy of the soul. The servants of God must always be either at prayer or employed in doing some good work."

In the Cross is his perfect joy. Therefore, he kisses the lepers and is happy to be a servant of the poor. "Rejoice," he says, "when you converse with persons who are mean and despised by the world."

His is no hunger-born socialism : his is a socialism of the Spirit. It is sung in rapturous songs and lived, even today, by some of the *dervishes* and *fakirs* of the East. "When you see a poor man," says Francis, "you should remember in whose name he came, that of Christ, who took upon himself our poverty and our infirmity. This man's poverty and infirmity is for us, as it were, a mirror wherein we can gaze and devoutly consider the poverty and infirmity of our Lord Jesus Christ."

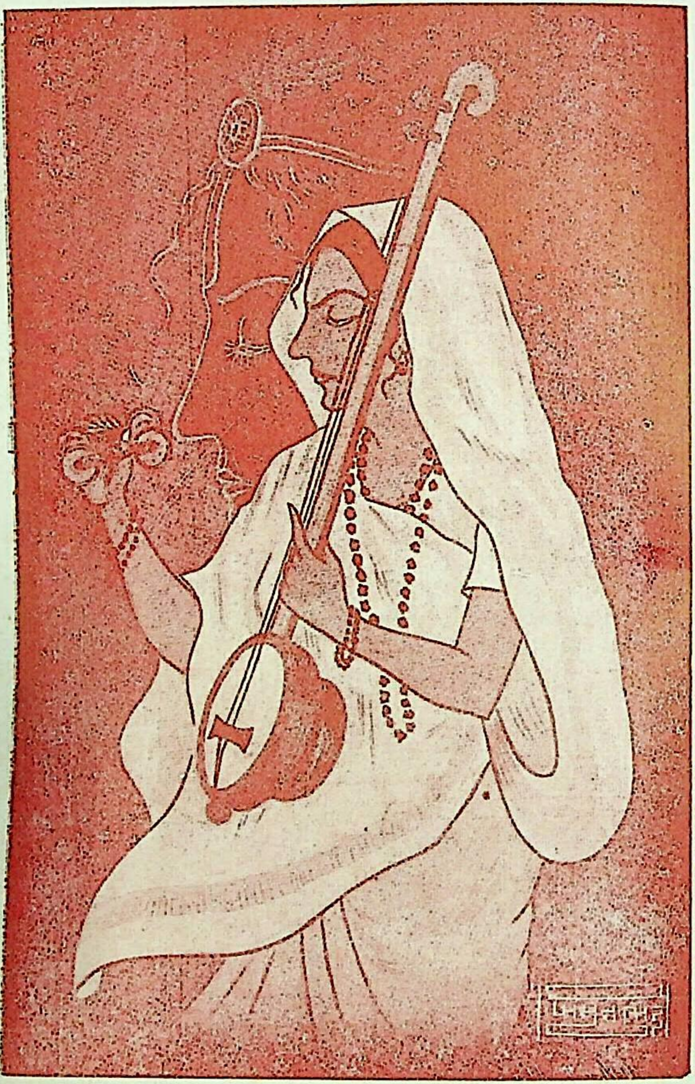
One day, indeed, when a poor man asked an alms of Francis, the saint, in a temporary lapse, forgot his usual custom and passed by the poor man unheeded. But



Saint Francis of Assisi

It is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned: it is in dying that we are born to external life.

—*ST. FRANCIS*



Saint Mira

I love thee, Shyama! more than life!
My strength, my solace and my bliss
In Thee alone I find : in Thee
And Thy Holy Name, my Sweetest One!

—SAINT MIRA

speedily, Francis recollected himself, ran after the poor man, and liberally relieved his wants. That very day, Francis made a solemn promise to God that he would never again refuse an alms to any poor man who would ask it of him for the love of God. And this promise, we may be sure, Francis faithfully kept till the day of his death.

Francis meets, one day, a poor man laden with a heavy burden. Francis lifts the load on his own shoulders and carries it for him. One other day, Francis, meeting a poor man, puts off his own mantle and gives it to him, saying :—"This mantle was with me but as a loan until such time as I should find one poorer than myself."

Francis washes the feet of the lepers and cleanses their wounds. One day, a leper meets him : he empties his purse in the leper's hand. Francis would not send away even the robbers. He would be like the sun that giveth its light to the just and the unjust. Some robbers break into one of his "retreats," and are driven away by the guardian of the place. Francis learns of it and immediately sends them the bread prepared for his own meals and a gentle message of love : and they come and fall down at his feet!

In a period, smitten with scramble for money and power, Francis shows the Way of a New Life. It is the way of simplicity. "Pure and holy simplicity," he says, "confounds the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of the flesh."

A little spare figure, a thin worn-out body, Francis is physically so frail and weak but his eyes are so sweet and bright! They shine with the light of love. Mournfulness and melancholy are not in his creed of life. "To the devil," he says, "belongs to be sad, but to us ever to be glad and rejoice in the Lord."

Francis believes in the gospel of spiritual cheerfulness. From time to time, he suddenly breaks forth into a song of joy, singing of his Lord and Master, Jesus. We read that the saint, meeting one day a disciple who has a sad face, rebukes him, saying :—"Why this outward grief and sadness? Let it be between you and God. But before me and others strive to be cheerful. Remember, it is not seemly that a servant of God should show a sad and troubled face before his brethren.".

Bravely does Francis battle with his body, becoming more and more rigid in controlling himself, his thoughts and conduct, more and more rigid in training his body, his mind and his heart in purity : but never does he lose his spiritual cheerfulness. To discipline his body he often plunges in winter-time into a pit of ice and snow, but he never surrenders his gladness of spirit.

One day, as Francis is assailed by a violent temptation, he puts off his clothes and beats himself with a cord. Even then he does not lose his sense of humour. He says, speaking to his body :—"Brother Ass! thus dost thou deserve to be treated, thus to be beaten." What tremendous *tapasya* (self-restraint, self-chastisement) he goes through, this *fakir* of Christ, until he conquers the flesh!

And with love and joy in his heart, he gives blessings to everyone. "The Lord give thee peace !"—this is his salutation to every one who meets him. "Peace to all beings!"—"*Shanti*,"—was the blessing breathed out by the *rishis* of India.

A *fakir* is a pilgrim. And as a pilgrim, Francis goes through the world, "taking nothing with him but Christ crucified," and for the sake of Christ putting up with the world's insult and dishonour.

One day, certain robbers fall upon Francis, asking him who he is. Francis says :—"I am the herald of the great King of Heaven." The robbers fall on him with fury, and strike him with blow after blow, and then cast him into a ditch, filled with snow, saying :—"Lie thou into the ditch, thou herald of nothing, yet thou callest thyself a herald of

God!" But Francis minds it not. In the ditch itself Francis goes on singing the praises of the Lord with joy and gladness.

And is not Francis the very picture of humility? A disciple asks him :—"Why is it that all the world cometh after thee? Why is it that everybody desireth to see thee, and to hear and to obey thee? Thou art not handsome : thou art not a man of great knowledge. Whence, then, comes it that all the world runneth after thee?"

And Francis, in deep humility, answereth thus :—"Brother! wouldst thou know indeed, why all the world runneth after me? This comes to me, brother! Because the eyes of Him, the most High, have not found among sinners one more vile nor more incompetent nor, indeed, a greater sinner than I. And, therefore, to do His wonderful work, God hath not found on earth a creature idler and more foolish than I. So it is, brother! that He hath chosen me to confound the nobility and the grandeur, the strength and beauty, the wisdom and virtue of the world, that all men may know that all virtue and all goodness cometh of God and not of any creature!"

In love and utter simplicity, Francis mingles with the poor. He admits no one to his Order who will not strip himself of all things, retaining nothing for himself. Francis believes profoundly in the teaching of his Master :—"Go and sell all thou hast and give to the poor!"

A peasant meets Francis, saying to him :—"O saint of God! I long to serve God. Blessed am I to have met you! Accept me in your Brotherhood, and tell me what I should do to please you."

Francis says to him :—"Brother ! if you will, indeed, be of my company and my interior life, go part with all your goods and give them to the poor."

Francis understands what a blessing it is to belong to the brotherhood of the poor. "It were a quicker journey to God from a hut," he says, "than from a palace." And poorer and purer than the "poor" are birds and animals. How much Francis loves them!

A youth has caught a number of turtle-doves and is taking them to market. He meets Francis on the way. "I pray thee, give me these gentle birds," says the saint. The good youth gives them all. And Francis receives them into his bosom, talks to them tenderly, and builds nests for them all.

A fisherman brings to Francis a water-fowl. Francis accepts the bird, then opens his hands to let it fly away. Another fisherman brings to him a great fish alive. Francis puts it back into the water of the lake. He speaks to swallows : he preaches to birds.

So great was St. Francis' love for the larks and other birds that he, on one occasion, said in tender, touching words :—"How happy would I feel if all the mayors of the cities and all the lords of the castles and towns would solemnly promise every year on the day sacred as the birthday of our Lord, to induce their men to do one thing,—to throw their wheat and their grain along the roads beyond the cities and walled towns so that our sisters, the larks and other birds, may have plenty to eat!"

His love tamed even a wolf! The "good wolf of Gubbio," they called the "little brother of St. Francis." Animals respond to love : but we, alas! torture them. "By what cries of pain," writes Countess Caesaresco, "by what looks of love have not beasts told men that they *thought!*" "Behold the animals! There is not one," writes Edward Carpenter, "but the human soul lurks within it, fulfilling its destiny as surely as within you!" The "God of the granite and the rose" is, also, "the soul of the sparrow and the bee," and the spirit of the tender goat and the mild cow and lamb.

The nations, alas! are wandering today in a "jungle" of "civilisation." The nations love violence : they trample upon the great vision of the One Life in all. Modern civilisation is baptized in blood. Even India is forgetting her ancient vision of reverence for life. I have heard "educated" Indians speak, echoing the words of some Western books, of "humane" slaughter! As well might we speak of "humane" murder! Stop *all* slaughter, brother!

St. Francis was a brother of all animals, a brother of life, a brother of all creatures. In his heart he communed with the Brotherhood of Life. An influence moved out of him, a strange, psychic influence : it enveloped others with the tenderness and love of his heart which felt for all creatures, human and sub-human.

He met, one day, a wood-cutter, chopping down a tree. To him, Francis spake :—"Brother! do not chop off the whole tree, but give it a chance to grow up again." And Francis offered him his food for the day.

Francis loved plants and flowers. When he saw flowers, he was filled with joy. Francis, like Buddha, embraced all creatures in love. Buddha carried on his shoulders a goat, which was being led to the sacrificial altar, and, meeting the king of that place, said :—"Sire! I offer myself as a sacrifice in the place of this poor, helpless, bleating goat." And the king was so moved that he released the goat.

FRANCIS was a wanderer without house or home : this homeless wanderer found his home in Nature and in the hearts of all creatures. In his "Canticle of the Sun," he praises "Brother Sun," through whom God doth light us. The Sun, Francis says, is a living image of my "Lord, the Highest." And Francis praises the Moon and Stars as his sisters, the Wind as his brother, Water as his sister, and Fire as his brother, through whom "Thou, O Lord, dost illuminate the night!" And Francis praises the Lord through "Mother Earth, rich in fruits and coloured flowers and grasses."

Remarkable is his "Canticle of the Sun." It shows that the heart of the saint was filled, through and through, with cosmic emotion for Nature, for the Sun and the Moon and the Stars, for Fire and Water, for all the elements which are indeed emanations of the Lord, making the Universe a Temple of beauty and joy. St. Francis' "Canticle of the Sun" has reminded me, again and again, of Guru Nanak's invocation to the Lord of creation, called *arati*. Listen to the following words of St. Francis :—

Most High, Omnipotent, Good Lord!
To Thee be the praise,
The glory, the honour and all benediction!
To Thee alone, Most High, do they belong,
And no man is worthy
To name Thy Name!

To Thee be praise
In all Thy creatures, Lord!
Praise be to Thee for Brother Sun!
By him is the Earth illumined, day by day :
And radiant is he and bright.
With what splendour shineth he!
The Sun, indeed, is a symbol of Thee!

To Thee be praise
For Brother Fire, my Lord!
Thou dost by Fire
Illuminate night after night.
How noble is Brother Fire!
How beautiful!
How robust and strong!

To Thee be praise
For Sister Water, Lord!
How humble is she!
How useful, too!
Ever chaste is she,
Pure beyond compare!

To Thee be praise, my Lord!
For Sister Moon and Stars.
In heaven they shine :
How fair!
How clear!
How precious!

To Thee be praise
For Brother Wind, my Lord!
For Air and Clouds :
For times serene and stormy.
To Thee be praise forever!

To Thee be praise, my Lord
For Mother Earth,
Who doth sustain and keep us,
And bringeth forth fruits
And coloured flowers and grass!

To Thee be praise, my Lord!
For those who pardon for Thy love,
Who bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are they
Who will in peace endure :
For Thou, Most High,
Shall give unto them a crown!

To Thee be praise, O Lord!
For our Sister Bodily Death,

From whom no man can escape.
Alas for them who die in mortal sin!
Blessed are they
Who are found in Thy Holy Will,
For the second death will not work them harm!

His feeling for Nature became for him a key to a new world of kinship and sympathy. Has it no message for the modern man? In India, in the long ago, men lived in fellowship with all creatures, with all life. Creation was one Family in God! This vision of cosmic unity inspired the ancient *rishi*, when he sang :—"*Ishavasyam idam sarvam!*" "All that is, is a vesture of the Lord!" In this message of unity with flower and field, with bird and animal, there is, methinks, a hope for mankind.

Leibniz, the great French philosopher, was a seer. He had the beautiful idea, the profound vision, that life on earth had three manifestations. Life sleeps in plants : life dreams in animals : life wakes in man. Yes,—life is one : and the One Life that wakes in men, dreameth in animals. Bruno, one of the great minds of the Middle Ages, pointedly said :—"Among horses, elephants and dogs, there are single individuals which appear to have almost the understanding of man."

Francis became the great awakener of his age. A new awakening is the world's piteous need, today. New sons and daughters of Krishna and Buddha, of Mahavira and Francis, are needed, today, to reveal anew the beauty of reverence for life,—sons and daughters, who would, renouncing eminence and honours, greed and greatness, be among the servants of animals and humanity.

AN EGYPTIAN MASTER

JUNNUNA attracts some seekers of God. They come from towns and villages : they sit at his feet to learn of him the truths of spiritual life. They take his name afar : and in Egypt and Arabia and Turkestan they call him the "Egyptian Master." But they are not many.

What a mercy of God when a great Teacher appears! Democracy makes a mistake in supposing that a crowd can understand and choose. Crowds lack comprehension. A "Master" is understood only by "prepared souls." And many do not understand the Master : they call him a "*kafir*" : the *mullahs* (Muslim priests) hate him as a heretic.

They carry reports to the Khalif of Baghdad. Egypt was, in those days, a province of this Khalif : and he is poisoned against the Master. Junnuna is seized and brought to Baghdad. In silence stands he before the Khalif. So Jesus stood before Pilate. Junnuna speaks not a word, but his eyes are aglow with a great Light. His silence is eloquent.

An old man draws nigh to him and whispers to him :— "Your eyes and your silence bear witness to your wisdom: you are not a culprit : you are a servant of God, a messenger of His Truth : and without His Will no one can touch a hair of your head. Mind not the *mullahs* : if it be God's Will that you go to prison, in prison, we know, you will glorify Him!"

And Junnuna is sent to jail! Again and again, have the messengers of God been imprisoned, persecuted, crucified, shot to death. But Truth is not stifled. Truth shines radiant on the gallows and in jail.

Junnuna goes to jail with a smile on his lips! The sun is still upon the hill-tops. A few of the Master's disciples are with him at the jail-gate : their tears are flowing fast. "Weep not," he says to them ; "I wish to go in peace. And naught happens without the Will of Allah : in Him is our peace!"

One of the wisest, the purest and the best of men goes into jail,—unmourned except by a few. The majority are under the influence of the *mullahs* : they call him an "atheist"! And this "atheist" taught that there is but one God and in Allah, the Eternal, is the peace of man!

The majority fail to understand the "Master" : men in crowds are swayed by harangues, not thought. Plato urges that numbers are no index to wisdom and that crowds are ruled by demagogues, "who go ringing on in long harangues, like brazen pots which, when struck, continue to sound till a hand is put upon them!" A society is in peril when led by its demagogues, not its purest and wisest men.

Junnuna is in jail for forty days. Hunger enfeebles him: but he is steadfast in fast and prayer. On being released he walks, but he is so weak that he falls, again and again, on the ground : his head bleeds. In this state he is brought before the Khalifa. The news spreads quickly abroad: his disciples gather in the garden of the Khalifa's mansion. The disciples see the Master again but are filled with indignation when they see him tired, exhausted, worn out, with blood-marks on his head!

Junnuna stands before the Khalifa in the garden : and the courtiers are around the Khalifa. He looks at Junnuna and is moved by what he sees,—a Teacher dear to his disciples as the Master, in tattered clothes, blood-stained, yet with eyes glowing with a strange, mystic light. The Khalifa offers Junnuna a seat and asks him to sit down. Then follows a little talk between the two.

Khalifa :—Junnuna! you are now free. But see that you teach nothing subversive of the state or the social order.

Junnuna :—I teach as I have been taught.

Khalifa :—What have you been taught?

Junnuna :—This, O ruler of men! that if a society would have life, it must live by the law of love, and that if a state would be strong it must be ruled by guardians of the moral law and they must live a simple, frugal life,—as lived the early Khalifas. They lived a hard and simple life. They eschewed luxury. They revealed Allah, the Eternal, in daily life. Their aspiration was not long prayers but communion with the Divine in silence and alms to the poor. They were the friends and guardians of the people. They were the sons of Light!

As Junnuna speaks, the Khalifa listens and quietly drinks in the words, one by one : and as Junnuna closes his little but lyrical talk, the Khalifa bursts into tears. And the courtiers and disciples, too, weep. There is, for a few minutes, a hush of holy silence. Then the Khalifa falls at Junnuna's feet and says :—"Master! forgive me. Accept me as thy disciple."

A miracle has happened! Such "miracles" have happened, again and again, in the history of the God-men, the mystics of Illumination, the sons of Light! The Khalifa now requests the "Master" to stay in the palace : the Khalifa serves the "Master" with wonderful devotion.

Junnuna has no thought of founding a sect. His gentle life influences many and his teaching regarding Allah, the Eternal, travels to towns and villages. He teaches that Allah, the Eternal, is the Light of the dawn and the setting sun, is the Beauty of the blue sky and the Breath of the living air, is the Wisdom of the pure in heart and the Radiance of the life of His lovers and saints.

For some time he stays in the palace, then takes leave of the Khalifa and returns to Egypt.

Back to his homeland,—at last! Junnuna is out of his seclusion to give his message to multitudes. He thrills them. They call him Junnuna Misri. They revere him as a "Master" of wisdom : and crowds are moved by his "Sayings." Here are a few :—

> When the Lord showers His love upon His servants, He becomes their Eyes, their Ears, their Hands. Then through Him they see, they hear, they speak, they give and take!
>
> Listen not to them who praise thee for gifts or charity or good deeds. The praise is not thine : the praise is His who giveth all!
>
> First be a servant of God : and until thou art become His servant, do not say thou art Divine. Else wouldst thou go into the deepest darkness of Hell!
>
> Two marks there be of him who is a true lover of the Lord :—(1) he is stable in censure and praise; and (2) he does his duty without a desire for fruit.
>
> Be not attached to them who are to the world attached. Do not flatter them who give money or gifts. And hate no man who causeth thee harm!

Many find a solace in these wonderful words. Are they not full of assurance, illumination and inspiration?

JUNNUNA spends the eve of his life in Egypt. The Egyptian Master's name travels far and wide. His influence grows: his life fascinates many. They mediatate on the grandeur of his sufferings and the glory of his teaching.

The *mullahs* continue to call him an "infidel," an "atheist": but he has lighted a fire which not all their efforts can quench. Fate has written that Junnuna should belong to all. From province to province spreads the message of this man who has searched and found, has wandered and suffered and, at last,—attained! In his heart there is room for all,—the Sunni and the Shiah, the Jew and the Christian, the Greek and the Gentile. And to all men in his quiet, gentle way, he points the Way of Blessedness.

Junnuna is become a servant of Allah. And He hath looked upon His servant with love. And out of the mouth of Junnuna speaketh Allah and out of the eyes of His servant looketh the Lord.

"What is your food?" they ask Junnuna. And he answers:—"Communion with God is the daily food of my life!"

"Why are you so patient with your opponents?" they ask him. And he answers :—"Truth is the Sword of God, and it never fails!"

"Who is the true giver of alms?" he is asked. And in answer he says :—"The true giver is he who never opens his ears to hear his praise. The true giver understands that all praise is the Lord's and that unto Him is all glory!"

"Is not man divine?" they ask him. And he says :—"Yes; but the proof that a man is divine is this, that he is ever-increasingly a servant of Allah, the Eternal!"

"And what are the signs of a true servant?"

Junnuna says :—"Two signs. (1) He suffers; and (2) in the midst of all sufferings he keeps his mind unruffled : he lives in the presence of Great Peace."

"What is the secret of the dedicated life?" he is asked. And he says :—"The secret lies in self-forgetfulness. Forget yourself, forget your work, and see that your hope is in God alone,—in none else, in none else!"

And this, too, he says :—"The world is whatever keeps you away from God! And he is a low-caste man who walketh not the way that leadeth unto the Lord!"

A disciple asks him :—"Master! whose company may I keep?" And the Master says :—"His who has no sense of 'thine' and 'mine'!"

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In a discourse, the Master says:—"Regard not the creatures as mean or inferior to you. Open the Inward Eye and you will behold the glory of Allah, the Eternal,—in all!"

Speaking to a man who has spent years in sin, he says :—"Let not your past sit as a burden upon you! Think of the Present and the God of the Present. In Him be absorbed and sing His Name!"

"Who is the happy man?" asks a disciple. And the Master says :—"He who knows God and is in Him absorbed!'

Speaking of the "Steps of Ascent," the Master says :—"He who would ascend to Allah, the Eternal, must mount up the following steps :—(1) giving up running after the things of the world; (2) aversion for worldly pleasure; (3) purity; and (4) each day growing in the love of God!"

In these "Sayings" of the Master is a treasure of infinite value which will never perish.

One day, he is crossing a field. He finds it covered with snow. A man is near : he is throwing grains on the ground.

The Master asks :—"Brother ! the ground is covered with snow : why do you throw the grains on the ground?"

The man answers :—"Yes; today the ground is covered with snow, and the birds know not where to go for food. For them I throw these grains on the ground that the birds may eat them when they can. The Lord will accept these little grains which I offer in devotion to the little birds."

Soon after, the Master goes to Mecca and he sees the very man there as a devotee of God going round the Kaaba.

Seeing Junnuna, this man says :—"How are you? You see how Allah has accepted my humble, little service to the birds! I threw the grains on the ground : see the 'fruit' now! God has had mercy on me and brought me to this holy place."

"Yes," says Junnuna, "the Lord accepts every little grain offered to His creatures with devotion!"

So Sri Krishna says to Arjuna in the Gita :—"A leaf, a flower, a fruit, a little water,—I accept every little gift offered with devotion."

BEAUTIFUL was the Master's life! Beautiful, too, was his death! Serene he lies on his death-bed.

A disciple asks him :—"Master! tell us what is your desire at this moment?"

The Master says :—"This only, that He be near me as I am nearing death, so that He,—my Friend,—may enter again into my song and reveal again His radiant Face to me "

So saying, the Master sings a song in Arabic,—a song filled with singular love and longing for Allah, the Eternal.

Then comes his last utterance before he passes on to his Abode :—"I am absorbed in the grace and love of my Beloved,—of Allah, the Eternal."

Junnuna lived God-absorbed. And God-absorbed, his soul ascended to the Home of Glory. The sun shone in splendour at that time : and, as in the case of St. Francis, a lover of God and of God's creatures, so in the case of Junnuna, a lover of God and the little birds of God, group after group of birds came and fluttered over him and received his blessings in the hour of his death.

His thoughts were deeper than the sea. And in his life was a beauty brighter than the beauty of the moon and the stars. In the years to be, pilgrims from India to Egypt will come to the spot, where Junnuna breathed the last benediction of his earth-life, and bow in lowly reverence to his blessed name and say :—"Here was one, who taught that wisdom, not wealth, is the Way,—one, who saw the Face of God unveiled, as did Kasyapa and Agastya, Yagnavalkya and Brihaspati and other holy Rishis of India, in the long, long ago!"

THE VISION OF UNITY

He who practises the *yoga* of *samadrishti* lives in a vision of unity. He realises that Life is one. He sees the One in all creatures, all nations, all races.

Such a man serves the Cosmic Purpose in whatever sphere he may work.

It is not for him to renounce the world and retire to a forest. It is not necessary for him to have the yellow robe or any of the other marks of outer renunciation. He has what is better, viz. inner renunciation.

He may be in the *grahstha ashrama.* He may be in this profession or that. He still dwells in the Eternal.

To him the family is a temple. To him a profession or occupation is a sphere of the Spirit. To him nothing is secular. To him every sphere is a channel of God's grace.

Such a man has risen above form values to the values of the Spirit.

The *yoga* of *samadrishti* is realised in great measure when the man feels within himself the pain of others. He says to himself:—"I feel the pain in my brother's body."

Such a man feels the passion of the Cross.

He is at one with the world in its painful pilgrimage. He has blent himself with humanity,—with all creatures travailing in pain.

He hath entered into the flame of sacrifice.

THE BELOVED OF MY NATIVE LAND

In him many silent centuries of Sind find a voice. A seer, a singer, a devout worshipper of the One Infinite Mystery whom the sages call by many names, Shah Abdul Latif is the peerless poet of Sind. He may be compared to the Pacific Ocean, the greatest and the deepest among the seas. Shah Latif is the greatest of Sindhi poets : he is also the deepest.

I sang to myself his lyrics in Europe, years ago. I heard in them the "Call of the Desert," the Call of the Infinite, and I was reminded of some of the sayings of the great Teacher of the 8th century, Abdul Wahid, renowned at once for his austerity and the sanctity of his life. Both he and Shah Latif sang of the Way of God and the ways of life. "The ways are various," sang Abdul Wahid, "the Way to the Truth is but one. And those who travel on the Way of Truth must go on their Road alone. And they are not known : for they go quietly on their Way, stage by stage. The rest of mankind are heedless of what is desired of them : and long sleep keeps them from following the Way of the Truth."

Shah Latif went "quietly on the Way." He was among the Awakened Ones : and he is become an Awakener of the millions of Sind. I count him among the great leaders and inspirers of my life. I regard him as a Poet with a world-message.

In crowded, noisy, third-class compartments of the Sind railways, passengers often would feel miserable. Sometimes the compartments were so over-crowded that it was difficult to get breeze. Then some one would sing a song of Shah Latif to the tune of a simple musical instrument, *ektara.* The noise ceased : there was the hush of silence. The tedium of the journey was forgotten in the Poet's song.

Camel-drivers, cart-drivers, gorwn-up men, little boys moving along dark paths, by day or night, would tune some simple lay of Shah Latif. In the Poet's words they found consolation. Peasants working in the field sang his songs as the patient oxen drove the primitive plough.

What a wide range of experience in the songs of this Poet! Myriad-minded was Shah Latif. I am not sure if he was a scholar. Some, indeed, would have us believe that, like the great Prophet of Islam, he could not even read and write!

Whether a scholar or not, one thing is sure : he did not learn much from books and school-masters. His teachers were these three :—(1) travel; (2) nature; (3) *fakirs.* With love and longing in his heart, he went about, absorbing into his mind influences of Nature and the *fakirs,*—worshippers of the ideal,—with whom he came in contact in different places. Latif was a much travelled man. He went up the mountains. He saw Rajputana. He visited Poorbunder. He travelled to Karachi. Travel had its hardship in those days but, also, its romance. Travel enriched Shah Latif's mind with impressions and experiences. Much of his poetry is a blend of the narrative and the lyric. And the materials of the stories woven in his verse have been, in a large measure, taken by him from the folk-songs of different places,—Rajputana, Gujrat, Kathiawar, the Punjab.

Nature was the Poet's great Teacher, and his poems are full of most moving descriptions of the desert, of mountains and seas, of lakes and woods and plains, of the sun, moon and stars, of the spring flower and autumnal rains, of the clouds in tempest and peace, of sunrise and sunset, of the camel, monkey and deer, of the nightingale, dove and swan. His descriptions of vegetable and animal life are amazing in the wide range they cover. He does not, like Browning, dissociate Nature from Humanity. He does not, like several Western poets, dissociate Nature from God. To him Nature is a moving symbol of the Spirit and reminds us, again and again, of the soul's quest of the Beauty that is God.

A child of Nature, he read her scripture and received her sacrament every day. The "civilised" man reads many books but seldom the one Book of Nature. Shah Latif heard Nature's voices calling him every day :—"Come and abide in Me!"

His *Risalo* consists of the poems he sang, as the spirit in him moved, and the poems were taken down by his disciples and, afterwards, brought together in a manuscript volume. He wrote no book himself. The books found in his house after he passed away were (1) the *Koran* and (2) the *Masnavi* by Jelal-ud-din Rumi.

Shah Latif communed with Nature. He studied every day in the School of Love. He found little time to understand other books. In some of his poems, he has indicated how superior is the wisdom of the heart to the knowledge of books. He says :—

Let there be in your heart
The play of Aliph (Allah),
And thou wilt know
The vanity of book-learning.
If thou wilt learn
To look on life with the pure eye,
Thou wilt know
That the Name of Allah is enough.
They who have longing in their hearts,—
They read only the page
Wherein they see the Beloved.

The longing to see the Beloved was as a flame in his heart :

and sometimes he looked as one drunken in spirit. In the wasted wreckage of human life, he saw still the secret of love. To him the great principle of man's moral and spiritual evolution was,—sacrifice. "Die to live," he says in one passage, "and you will see the beauty of the Beloved." I would have every one inscribe these words in his heart :—*Die to live*. Be not afraid of death in the service of Love! For *Tat twam asi*! Thou art That! Man is immortal, and Love is ever young.

SHAH LATIF was born in 1687 : he passed away in 1752. He was descended from Shah Karim who was a Syed and who was reputed to be a saint. There are stories current still which speak of the saint's miracles. The poet's father was Syed Haveli Allah Shah with whose name, also, are associated some poems.

Latif was born in a village named Hala Haveli in the Hyderabad (Sind) District. With the Poet's life, as it is told us by Sindhi bards, are associated many miracles. These I will not dwell upon. To me, indeed, the Poet's life, shorn of its miraculous stories, has a beauty of its own. The main incidents of his life are very few but significant.

He is sent to a school : he learns easily the first letter of the alphabet,—*Aliph*. But when the teacher tells him to repeat the second letter, *Bey*, Latif says boldly :—"*Aliph*." In the scripture of the Poet's life, there was but one letter, —*Aliph*, a symbol of Allah, the Eternal. Such a soul could learn little in the schools. Is it not true that some of the great souls have owed little to schools ? Often the schools are prison-houses : and a great soul must follow the law of its own development, unfettered by schools and systems. Abdul Latif finds in Nature his unfailing teacher. And even as a boy he breaks forth into beautiful poems. He is out, one day, to a forest, to play with his companions. Soon he forgets the play and himself and his friends : he hides himself underneath a tree. His friends miss him and return home. His father moves out in quest of the lost son, and at last finds a cloth waving over a tree and covered with dust. He exclaims in verse :—

The winds are blowing :
The clothes are covered with dust.

Abdul Latif hears his father's verse and immediately completes it with one of his own composition :—

The breath in me is still alive
With the longing in my heart
To see the Loved One.

He loves mountains and streams and hills and lakes and the desert sands. At an early age, he sees a beautiful Moghul girl. He falls in love with her at first sight. He sings verses about her at the threshold of her house. He is turned out by her father! His love for her is irrepressible. A story, which the simple Sindhi peasant sings, has it that the Poet becomes a pigeon and coos his love to the fair girl from the trellis of her balcony! It cannot be denied that a new soul is born into the Poet after the vision of his Beatrice. The father of the girl is obdurate. The Poet sits on a sand-hill and looks from afar at the house of the fair girl!

Then he goes on his travels. He comes in contact with different types of men. His love grows from more to more. And he sings songs, pouring upon them the passion of his heart. On his visit to Tatta, he hears some sounds. A man is singing, again and again, some words from a song of the Poet :—

Alone! Alone!

Alone shall I wend
My way to my Love.

The Poet approaches the man and asks :—"Who are you?" "I am," he says, "a camel-driver. I and my two rich comrades were moving on with the camels laden with merchandise. We passed by a little village. We heard some *fakirs* sing some songs. One of them went into my heart. Since that day I have left all,—camels and goods and comrades. I have only been singing the song :—

Alone! Alone!
Alone shall I wend
My way to my Love."

The song was of Latif's own compostion! "May I complete the song?" the Poet asks. The camel-man was filled with joy. Then the Poet gave the other lines in the song :—

In front of me I see
Mountains, thorns, desert-spaces:
Lord! help Thy servant,
Whose only companion is,—
Sorrow for the Loved One!

The man listened to the song and was so overcome with emotion that he fell down, senseless! The Poet often said he had not seen another filled with such longing and love for the Lord as that poor camel-man.

The Moghul girl's father died, and the Poet married her. He loved her deeply : he remained childless. "My children," he said, "are the *fakirs* with love-smit hearts." "The seeker," he said on another occasion, "must remain single : else would he be as the bee caught in the honey-cup."

The last eight years of his life the Poet spent at Bhit in the very heart of the Desert. There, he and his disciples built a house for prayers and some sheds to live in. Lovers of music and song came to him from different places : some stayed with him and served him. One of them played most charmingly on the harp. Another took special care of the Poet's two dogs. Two of his disciples,—Atal and Chanchal,—were masters of music : they came from Delhi. In their company sat the Poet, far into the night, and sang those wondrous songs which, after his death, his disciples brought together in a single volume, now known as *Shah jo Risalo.*

The circumstances attending his passing away are moving. He is at Bhit. The spot is secluded and trees surround him. He lies down. He puts a sheet over his body. He asks his comrades to strike music and sing songs. Then quietly he passes away! What poetry in that death!

His body lies in an impressive tomb to which there is a door with silver screens. And on the tomb is inscribed the following line, which also gives, we are told, according to the *Abjad* system of calculation, the year of his death :—"*Gardeed mahw ishk wujoode Latif Meer.*" Which rendered into English means :—"Latif was absorbed in Love." An apt summing up of his life! It was a life absorbed in Love. And, every year, his death-anniversary is celebrated at his Tomb with a three days' fair at which *fakirs* and Sufis assemble and sing his poems.

A few of the things of this Muslim Poet, this Sufi *sanyasin,* are still preserved : his yellow coloured clothes, his white cap, his shoes, his staff, and the coarse home-spun *khatta* on which he slept. No spot in Sind can be more sacred than this Bhit in the Desert, where stands the shrine of the Poet-Saint. And I dream of a day, when men will come from East and West on a pilgrimage to this Tomb as to the shrine of a world-sage and a world-poet.

HERE was a man who saw, almost three centuries ago, that religion was wisdom of the Heart, that wisdom was love, and that to love was to rise above the "ego" and enter into communion with the Face Divine.

They ask him, one day, if he was a "Shiah" or a "Sunni."

He says :—"Betwixt both."

They say to him :—"But betwixt both is nothing."

He answers :—"And I am nothing."

To realize this "nothingness" is to have that *cosmic consciousness* and that *cosmic emotion* which mark out, to my mind, a soul with a world-message.

On another occasion, the Poet says :—

Fasts and prayers,—
They have their value:
But there be yet another Light
Whereby to see the Beloved.

It is the light of Love.

And with love-awakened eyes he kept up long hours in the night, singing, singing, watching for the coming of the King in his Chamber! His disciples complained, one night, of mosquitoes. "We are unable to sleep," they said. "And, therefore, are the mosquitoes your friends!" said the Poet. "They keep you awake that you may remember the Beloved."

In one place, the Poet says :—"Never was it known that one met the Beloved in happiness." Shah Latif's poetry is charged, through and through, with the idea that sacrifice is love's sacrament. In that most popular of the Poet's stories, *Sasui* and *Punhu*, Sasui is represented as saying to herself :—

Die
That thou mayst be Beautiful!
Summon up thy courage now,

And surrender thy life-breath
That thou mayst find the Friend!

Again :—

Them who die before death,
No death can mortal make!
They who to New Life awake,
They live for ever!

And this awakening to New Life is through surrender of life to the Infinite Ideal. In a passage of great beauty, the Poet says :—

They who accept the Cross
As their wedding-bed,—
To them cometh the vision of God
In Death!

Again :—

Love's pledge was ever this :—
To suffer and be slain!

Is there a nobler message than this for us in the growing struggle of Humanity, today? When will She be free? I know not the day and the hour. One thing I have felt, again and again : when men and women will walk with God in the strivings of this agitated age and be ready to bow to Him in obedience to the call of sacrifice,—then, in truth, will the nations be blessed again. And Mother Humanity, dying a million deaths in the voluntary sufferings of Her sons and daughters, will re-arise in the glory of New Life! When, O when shall we worship God with this *yagna* of sacrifice?

FOLLOW THE FLUTE !

THE message of the flute has nourished India's poetry and art. In what rapturous strains do Mirabai, Sur Das, Vidyapati and Chandidas sing of Sri Krishna!

Mirabai, a princess, becomes Krishna's devotee and kisses the rod of persecution as the Master's gift. For His sake she bears all, she blesses all. And, again and again, with tear-touched eyes she breaks forth into the song :—"Krishna has entered my heart!"

And Sur Das! They call him "the blind bard of Agra." He had a vision of Krishna : then, according to a story, he passed through the "dark night of the soul." He was "blinded" by Krishna's vision! Sur Das,—blind physically,—became a seer spiritually. All was "darkness" for him : he only saw the "Light,"—the Krishna-Light. The vision of the Heart made him "blind" to other things. With what love he sings of Krishna,—*Shyama Sundara*, as he calls him :—

Night and day mine eyes rain tears :
For me 'tis the rainy season always,
For Shyama Sundara hath concealed himself!

In another poem he sings:—

Brija is drowned in my tears :
Come, O Lord! come to deliver thy drowned devotees.

Hear him again. He sings out of the vision of an anguished heart :—

Mine eyes are rivers :
My limbs are tired :

And the stars have vanished, all!
For thou, Krishna art away!

In the heart of Sur Das was a Flame of Love.

Vidyapati sings of his love for the Lord through the ages. "Mine eyes," the poet says, "have gazed, again and again, at the beauty of the Lord : they yearn to gaze for ever and evermore!" Another poet sings of his longing to see "Krishna's Face with a million eyes!"

How moving are the songs which Vaishnava poets have put in the mouth of Radha represented as being in quest of Krishna! I give a rough rendering of some pieces taken from Gnanadas and Chandidas,—two of the Vaishnava Singer of Bengal :—

What can I give Thee, Lord?
Again and again, have I asked myself :—
" What can I give Thee? What?"
Thyself alone must I give Thee!

Whate'er is Thine must go to Thee:
And all that's mine is Thine.
My wealth is Thine : my house is Thine :
My all is Thine.

For Him I gave up all I had :
For Him I courted deep disgrace :
And now He cometh not to me!
How can I console my heart?

The music of His Name
Hath deeper gone than these mine ears may know :
Swiftly hath it touched my heart :
This music makes me Krishna-mad!

What more to Thee may I say, Lord?
In life, in death,

And in the lives beyond this life,
Be Thou the King of Radha's Heart!

ONE day Radha asks Krishna :—"Master! the flute is on thy lips. Why is it so near to thee?"

And Krishna points to the holes in the flute and says :—"The flute has consented to be cut up into holes. I breathe into the flute my breath : and there is music for the healing of men."

How many will, flute-like, consent to be "cut up into holes," and surrender themselves to the Lord? How many will accept the *sadhana* of the Cross,—the *sadhana* of sacrifice?

The message of the flute has an appeal for the simple. The rich have gold. But to hoard is to narrow the heart. The clever or learned have active brains and "knowledge" of books. But books, to a man lacking the inner light, are as spectacles behind which there are no eyes!

When Krishna played upon the flute in Gokul and Brindaban, whom did he attract? Not the clever, but innocent *gopis* and simple peasants. Krishna's message is for the poor in spirit.

Mirabai had to put away her regal glory to become Krishna's disciple. Chaitanya had to resign his chair of philosophy to enter into service of the Lord.

ON the threshold of her house in the street she stands,—a girl of tender years. They pass through the street,—boys and girls, men and women. She stands!

Some laugh at her. Some taunt her. Some call her shameless. Some throw little stones at her. She stands!

Hours pass by. She stands! Her father calls her saying, 'tis time for meals. She stands!

Then says her mother :—"Come! 'tis time to eat."

"Mother," she says, "I wait : for in my heart is a longing."

"What ails thee, my child?" the mother asks.

And with tears in her eyes, the maiden says :—"Mother! I learn that he will pass by the street, today : Krishna, the Compassionate. Today : at what hour I know not. But some time, today! And I stand waiting for his coming : for in my heart is a longing to follow the flute."

With eyes of shining expectation, with a heart smitten with longing, she awaits, speechless, the coming of Sri Krishna. How many have such longing for communion with Krishna ?

WE are, I believe, at the beginning of a New Movement. Krishna wants us for the service of India and Humanity. For piteous and urgent is the need of the world today. The dominating civilisations of the world are industrial, aggressive, external. Modern civilisation threatens more and more to become soulless, to crush under the wheels of the Mammon-God the deeper values of life. The nations, alike in East and West, need the healing message of Krishna's Flute.

In two things specially is modern life, as it seems to me, stronger than the past,—in science and organisation. But where, O where, is the longing to follow the Flute? Therefore, with all its accumulations of knowledge and experience, modern civilisation is aggressive.

Many, alas! in India would imitate the aggressiveness which, in the West, has meant hate, strife, violence. When India was herself, her culture and life were inspired by the one longing :—Follow the Flute!

How many in India would follow the Flute? They who would, must believe profoundly in silence. Excitement is not work. Talk is not service. Great nations have not been talkative.

When a Spartan king was asked to hear a man who could speak as a nightingale, he answered :—"No! I have heard the bird!" A wise teacher of ancient Greece urged his disciples to talk as little as possible. India needs strong, silent men. Not talkers, but quiet, humble men,—with a longing in their hearts to enter the service of Love.

"Let him *silently* offer worship,"—is the injunction given us in an ancient scripture. The offering of work and worship must be given *silently*. Young men! wounded lies the world! But the healing is in Krishna's Song of Love. Carry in your hearts a longing : and whether in school or college, on the roadway or in the street, you too may hear the voice :—Follow the Flute!

YEARS have passed since I returned from my wanderings in the West. I returned with deeper love for India, with a strange, new appreciation of the wisdom of the East and the vision of the West.

I surveyed the situation in India, and I asked :—"Where art Thou, O Lord?"

I looked into the temples and found so many no better than market-places. And I asked :—"Where art Thou, O Lord?"

I looked into our schools and colleges. I found they were cradles of an imitation-cult or at best centres of cold intellectualism. The culture of the Spirit was not there. And I asked :—"Where art Thou, O Lord"

I looked into the intellectual faces of India's youths. I found them busy about many things, but forgetful of the one thing needful. And again I asked :—"Where art Thou, O Lord?"

In the shouts and shows of today, in the conflicts of parties and creeds, I see "civilisation" still dominated by materialism. I see it sitting heavy upon India. Yet was India once the birth-place of the Beloved. I see society still torn asunder by creeds and cults of power. I see "religions" still swayed by the dogmas that divide. I see the poor still trampled upon by the proud of power and wealth. I see brother-animals still led to the slaughter-house. . .

And my aching heart cries, again and again, in the silence of the night, and the silence of the dawn :—"O Krishna! come! We have banished Thee long! India's agony calls Thee! A broken, bleeding humanity calls Thee! Creatures tortured by the cruel hand of man call Thee! Come, O Krishna! And with thy brothers, the Buddha and Jesus, Kabir and Nanak, the Bodhisattvas and the Saints, be the healing Heart of humanity!"

Is this civilisation preparing to destroy itself? Where is our hope if not in a new Brotherhood of races and religions, a new Brotherhood of the nations of East and West? Krishna's Flute is to me a symbol of this hope, a symbol of the new song of a new divine humanity!

A CHILD OF THE SPIRIT

Tolstoy defined history as the life of the nations.

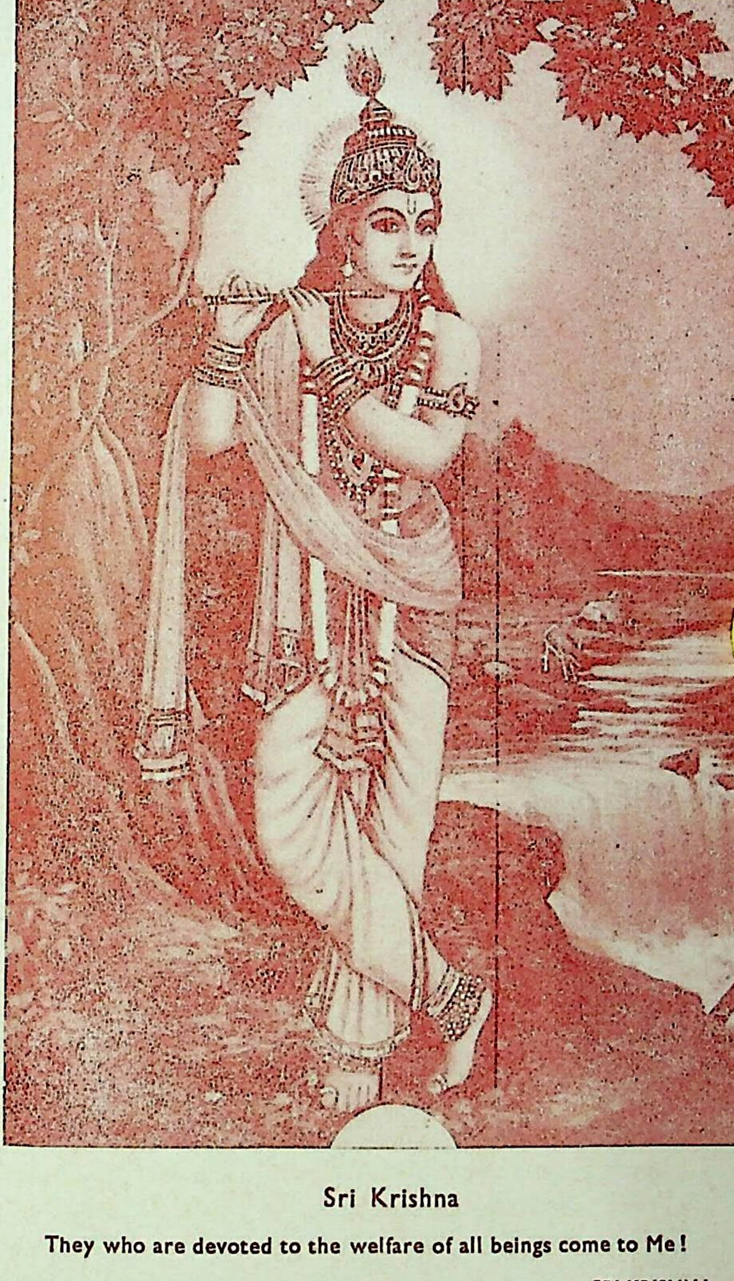
History, it is true, is the drama of the nations : but the makers of this drama are not Alexanders and Caesers, Napoleons and Hitlers, Stalins and Churchills. The drama of a nation is the story of its exceptional men,—and women,—dreaming of life sublime and living it, singing of noble ideals, making music out of language, and out of music moulding men into instruments of the Eternal Will.

To this class of "exceptional men" belong saints and sages, seers and singers : and they are the monopoly of no one nation, religion, or race. The "exceptional men" have appeared among all races and religions,—among Hindus no less than among Muslims. There is no conflict between Hindu saints and Muslim mystics. The more I study their lives and teachings, the more I grow in the joy of fellowship with them all, realising that there is wonderful unity between Hindu sages and Muslim *dervishes* of God.

One of these *dervishes* was Hatim Hashim. His life and his words have deeply impressed me. Hatim's was a simple life,—uneventful, you will say, but it has thrilled me. His words are simple and radiant with the light of a seer and servant of God.

He loved Truth : he worshipped Truth : he lived, each day, in Truth and Love. He lived a life of *tapasya* : he controlled his appetites. He disciplined his mind : he purified his heart. He endured, he suffered, and he waxed in wisdom. A Muslim saint bore witness to Hatim Hashim in pregnant words :—"A *mahatma* like Hatim Hashim is a rare jewel in this world."

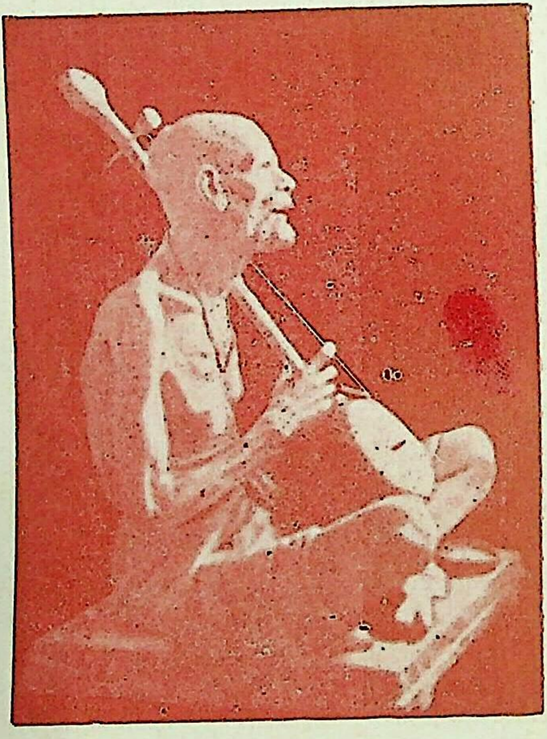
He received little education. He read little : he wrote



Sri Krishna

They who are devoted to the welfare of all beings come to Me!

—*SRI KRISHNA*



Saint Sur Das

Even death cannot end
My longing for Thee, Beloved!
As the rain-bird, in utter loneliness
Calls its lover unceasingly,
Even so do I wait for a vision of Thee!

—*SURDAS*

little. He spoke from realisation : and out of his mouth came precious pearls of wisdom. This "illiterate" *dervish* was an illuminated one.

He lived in Khorasan. He married a lady who was, like him, devoted to God. "He will provide," she said. She did not let her mind be disturbed by poverty. She cast her cares on the Lord : and the Lord took care of her and Hatim, as He has always taken care of His *bhaktas* and devotees in all countries and all ages.

They came to him from far and near, saying :—"Master! teach us!" And he taught profound truths in simple words. The number of his disciples grew from more to more. Speaking to them, one day, he said :—"Fellow servants of God! you now are many. I am illiterate : how long can I teach you? It will be kind of you to help me in choosing some one who may teach you and teach me!"

At a meeting of aspirants, they discussed the question :—"Who is a true spiritual leader?"

One of his disciples said :—"A warrior of the Lord."

"No," said Hatim Hashim, when they asked him his opinion; "a warrior is a *ghazi*, one who fights and kills others on the battlefield : but a spiritual leader is one who fights himself and becomes a martyr."

Another disciple said :—"A spiritual leader is a philanthropist."

"No," said Hatim; "such a man is a liberal giver : but a spiritual leader must be a receiver of God's grace."

"And who receives the grace of God?" they asked him.

And he answered :—"He who looks up to God in the daily trials of life and whose one only hope is God and none but God!"

A wealthy man offered Hatim a portion of his wealth. Hatim said :—"I will not take from you. I shall take only from the Lord!"

An atheist entered into discussion with him. "Whence have you your daily food?" asked the atheist.

And the *dervish* answered :—"From the Store of God."

The atheist said :—"How strange! You receive from the people and you give credit to God!"

And Hatim said :—"Have I ever taken aught from you?"

"True," replied the atheist, "you have never taken anything from me. But do you mean to say your daily food descends from Heaven?"

"Not mine alone but everybody's food cometh from Heaven!"

"Then sit with your doors closed," the atheist said, "and see how food comes to you!"

"You are right," replied Hatim. "I was a child : for two years I sat in my room : then, too, food came to me,—to my very mouth!"

"How can food come to you from Heaven?" the atheist asked.

"As it comes to the bird."

"But what about one who is on the earth?"

"As it comes to the ant!"

The atheist was silenced. And in stillness tears touched his eyes. Were they the tears of repentance? Humbled and repentant, the atheist asked Hatim for a few words of *upadesh* (instruction). And the holy man said :—"Brother! build not thy hope in men! Whatever thou doest, do it as an offering to God!"

What a noble teaching! Does not Sri Krishna say to Arjuna in the *Gita* :—"Arjuna! whatever thou eatest, whatever thou givest in charity, whatever thou drinkest, whatever thou doest, do it as an offering to the Lord"?

On one occasion, Hatim said :—"Early in the dawn, Satan comes to me and asks, 'What will you eat?' And I say to him :—'The dead!' And Satan asks :—'What will you wear?' And I say to Satan :—'The clothes of the dead!' And Satan asks :—'Where will you dwell?' And I say :—'In the grave!' And Satan finds he has nothing further to say. He leaves me and departs."

It is true, he who wants nothing, he who asks not for good food and good clothes and a good house, he who is dead to this world and is happy to live in the tomb of silence,—he cannot be tempted by Satan.

One day, Hatim asked a seeker :—"How are you?"

The seeker said :—"Happy and peace-filled!"

Then said Hatim :—"Brother! happy is he who has crossed the world's illusions and reached the Shore : peace-filled is he who has the joy of the spiritual world!"

A man asked Hatim :—"What is your deepest desire?"

And Hatim said :—"To live in joy, day and night! The day I do not sin,—in thought or word or deed,—against God, is the day of joy for me!"

One day, a man said to Hatim :—"This man has untold treasure!"

Hatim said :—"Yes,—he has earned untold treasure. Has he, also, earned endless life? If not, of what use will his wealth be to him in the hour of death?"

In his travels, Hatim reached Baghdad,—the seat of the Khalifa. On hearing of Hatim's arrival, the Khalifa sent his men to request Hatim to come to the Khalifa's *darbar*. On arriving at the *darbar*, Hatim said to the Khalifa :—"O man of renunciation! *Salaam!*"

The Khalifa is surprised and says :—"How am I a man of renunciation? Am I not a ruler of the realm? Renunciation is yours, O *dervish!*"

"No," says Hatim. "You are a man of renunciation."

"How?" asks the Khalifa.

And Hatim answers :—"God says :—'The world's wealth is naught.' You have renounced spiritual treasures and collected the world's wealth,—nothing! You have renounced the true wealth,—of the Spirit. I have but given up the world's wealth and the world's desires and am intent on spiritual treasures."

Hatim did not know the learning of books, nor the way of scholars. But scholars came to him to learn of him, and books may be written to interpret the meaning of his thought-filled words. Wherever he went, he blessed multitudes, and whenever he taught, he illumined and inspired. A whole school of wisdom was in his heart.

He taught all to beware of pride and greed. He referred to three kinds of pride :—(1) the pride of the ruler; (2) the pride of the rich; and (3) the pride of the scholar. The third pride, he said, was more fearful than the first or the second.

He spoke of four kinds of "mind" :—(1) *murda*; (2) *rogee*; (3) *ālasi*; and (4) *roshan*. The *murda* mind is the mind of him who is an atheist,—denying and defying God. The *rogee* or diseased mind is the mind of the sinner. The *ālasi* or lazy mind is the mind of the greedy and selfish man. The *roshan* or illumined mind is the mind of him who, by self-discipline and meditation, lives in the Divine Presence, every day.

As an aid to the devout life, he suggested that the seeker should remember that whatever he does is being seen by God and whatever he says is being heard by God. And in the hour of silence, he said, the seeker should meditate on God as the All-Seer.

Hatim emphasised three disciplines for the growth of spiritual life :—(1) Whatever you eat or drink or enjoy, remember that God is looking at you. (2) Whatever you say, see that you do not utter a single word of untruth. (3) Whenever you open your eyes to see, take care that your eyes are clean, pure, not wayward nor sold to Satan.

Hatim taught that the seeker after God must practise self-examination every day. And in self-examination, the seeker must ask himself these four questions :—(1) In doing service, have I a motive of my own? (2) In speaking anything, am I selfish? (3) In giving alms, do I seek anything for myself in return? (4) In earning or collecting money, do I flatter any or do I stand up in courage and hold money as a trust for the service of others?

Hatim spoke of three stages in the progress of *vairagya* or renunciation. (1) In the first stage, the seeker's strength is faith in God. (2) In the second stage, the seeker learns to suffer more and more to glorify God. (3) In the third stage, the seeker has grown in God's love and, in love, has learnt to forget himself,—his all,—in God, the Beloved.

Speaking to some of his disciples, one day, Hatim said :—"If you will become instruments of the Divine Will, vessels of His grace, choose nothing but rejoice in the station or the work allotted to you by God. For, remember this, not what you choose but what He does is the best for you!"

Hatim's words were simple : his thought was freed from the heavy chains of logic. His simple, aspiring life liberated his mind for concentration. His heart, emancipated from the chaos of desires, rose in silence, in spiritual stillness, to a stage where you see nothing but God, hear nothing but God, feel nothing but God. It is the stage which "statesmen" and political leaders understand not : for they see not the emptiness of the things and honours of the earth. It is the stage which is above the reach of those who seek the bubble of "greatness." It is the stage which they reach who, rising beyond debate and doubt, become children of the Spirit, seeking a way out of the agony, the tears and tragedy of this life into utter selflessness,—into the service of Love.

One of these "children of the Spirit" was this holy man of Islam,—Hatim Hashim.

THREE QUESTIONS

THEY wandered in exile. They wandered in the woods. For thirteen long years they must not return home to Hastinapur, nor be seen by friends or foes. The five Pandava brothers,—princes,—wander in concealment.

One day they feel thirsty,—very thirsty. Then says the eldest brother named Yuddhishtra, to the youngest :—"Thirsty are we beyond endurance. Take your arrow-case and fill it with water!"

And the youngest Pandava goes out and finds a pool. A crane,—the king of cranes,—cries out :—"Young man! drink nothing until you answer my questions."

But Nakula pays no heed and drinks water and falls down dead on the spot!

Yuddhishtra waits long. Nakula returns not! Then does Yuddhishtra send to the spot the next youngest brother,—Sahadeva,—saying:—"It is late: we are thirsty. Find out your brother, and bring water in your arrow-case."

Sahadeva is drawn to the same pool, and is astonished to see his brother lying dead. Sahadeva, too, hears a sound warning him against drinking or taking water without answering questions. Sahadeva, too, heeds not, and falls down dead on the spot.

Next Arjuna goes out and meets the same fate. Then Bhima : he, too, drops down dead on the spot. At last, Yuddhishtra goes himself, and to him speaks the crane these words of warning :—"I am a spirit imprisoned in a crane. You drink without answering my questions : you drink at the peril of your life!"

Then Yuddhishtra says :—"Ask the questions you will."

And the crane asks :—"How may a man be wise ?"

Yuddhishtra answers :—"By studying the Veda!"

The crane asks :—"Who is he who is not rich though he looks one?"

Yuddhishtra answers :—"He who having much gives nothing."

"What is the secret of happiness?" asks the crane.

And Yuddhishtra answers :—"Speak the truth and be kind and you will be happy!"

Then says the crane :—"You have answered well. Live, and let your brothers live! Live and drink of the water of the pool, and be blessed!"

And to these ancient questions are there not, also, modern answers ?

(1) How may a man be wise? Study the *Jeevan Veda*, the Scripture of Life, for wisdom is of experience born.

(2) Who is he who is not rich, though he looks one? He who has gathered gold and narrowed his heart, for true wealth is love, and lack of love is poverty.

(3) What is the secret of happiness? Self-realisation, for happiness is in nothing outer, happiness is within.

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